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LETTER DATED 27 JANUARY 1992 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ISRAEL TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

In recent weeks, the Lebanese Government has undertaken an intensified campaign to blame Israel for trying to "thwart any attempt to bring harmony to Lebanon". The letters from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon addressed to the Secretary-General of 17 January 1992 (S/23435) and 21 January 1992 (S/23453) are but the latest examples of the Lebanese Government's allegations vis-à-vis Israel. The charges contained in the Lebanese letters not only reverse the order of cause and effect but also rely upon inaccurate data, including some geographical errors.

In his letter of 21 January 1992, the representative of Lebanon states in paragraph 2 that, "Israel has been able to cut off the Rashaf-Hadatha road and build a new road linking Rashaf to Beit Yahoun within the so-called 'security zone', which is virtually tantamount to incorporating Rashaf into the area occupied by Israel and isolating it from the rest of the country." As the UNIFIL deployment map attached to the report of the Secretary-General of 21 July 1991 (S/22829) indicates, the village of Rashaf is clearly situated inside the security zone maintained by Israel. Moreover, since for many years roads have existed linking Rashaf to Beit Yahoun, there would be no need to build a new one in order to "incorporate" Rashaf into the said area. The necessity to block the road from Rashaf to the village of Hadatha situated north of the security zone arose in order to prevent the use of the road by the extremist Shiite organization Hizbollah to introduce arms and ammunition, including car bombs and explosive devices, into the area. Access to and from the village by its residents continues to be unimpeded and no limitations have been imposed on the supply of foodstuffs and other goods.

The allegations of the Permanent Representative of Lebanon in his letters would appear to be somewhat self-contradictory. In his letter of 17 January, he claims that the Lebanese Army "has confiscated all heavy and medium weapons", thereby in effect admitting that it has not confiscated light weaponry. Yet in the same sentence, the representative of Lebanon then claims that the Lebanese Army has "banned all forms of armed presence in areas under its control". If the Lebanese Army has indeed "banned all forms of armed

presence" then why has it failed to confiscate light weaponry? And if it has failed to confiscate light weaponry, then it has obviously not "banned all forms of armed presence". Surely, the representative of Lebanon is aware that it is rifles and handguns which constitute the basic tools of the terrorists' trade. In fact, the Lebanese Minister of the Interior, Sami al-Khatib, declared just a few days ago that, "weapons of resistance are not included in the decision of the Lebanese Government to collect weapons from the militias" (Voice of the Mountain, 18 January 1992).

Furthermore, in his letter of 17 January, the representative of Lebanon cites what he describes as "some major constructive developments", yet he completely overlooks the major destructive developments which have taken place, such as the escalation of terrorist activities in southern Lebanon. Since the deployment of the Lebanese Army in the south, there has actually been a marked increase in the number of incidents and casualties as a result of terrorist actions, which have more than doubled in 1991 as compared with 1990. The representative of Lebanon fails to even mention the destabilizing role which has been played by Hizbollah, despite the fact that it is the Hizbollah which bears much of the responsibility for the precarious and unstable situation in southern Lebanon.

The leaders of Hizbollah make no attempt to hide their intentions. They are quite explicit about their opposition to peace and their use of violence. Sheikh Abbas Musawi, Secretary General of the Hizbollah, vowed to step up terrorist attacks against Israel as part of a "pan-Islamic campaign to foil the [Madrid] conference" (Washington Times, 30 October 1991). On 9 April 1991, Sheikh Naim Qasim, Deputy Secretary General of Hizbollah, said that, "Frankly, we think that the only solution to the Palestinian problem is through the continuation of military jihad against the Zionist entity. There is absolutely no other solution, and there can be no reconciliation, negotiations, sitting around tables or American or international assurances. The resistance rifle alone can liberate and alone can achieve victory and glory" (Voice of the Oppressed; FBIS-NES-91-070, p. 42). On 6 December 1991, the Voice of Lebanon quoted Sheikh Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah, the spiritual leader of Hizbollah, as saying in a Friday sermon that "We have to understand that dealing with Israel is prohibited ..." (FBIS-NES-91-236, p. 60). On 18 December 1991, Hizbollah issued a statement which said that "the Arabs must walk out of these farcical negotiations ... Now they must submit to the will and aspirations of their people, who reject the mere presence of the Zionist entity, much less reconciliation with it" (Voice of the Oppressed; FBIS-NES-91-244, p. 32).

Operating with cruel indifference to the fate of innocent Lebanese civilians, Hizbollah and other terrorist organizations continue to use civilian centres as bases of operation. Therein lies the true cause of the suffering of the civilian population of southern Lebanon. Though the representative of Lebanon purports to be anguished over the situation of the population in the area, the Government of Lebanon has done nothing to halt or prevent Hizbollah activities. In fact, it has tacitly and explicitly encouraged Hizbollah and other organizations to continue with their acts of terrorism.

Recently, Lebanese Prime Minister Omar Karameh said that, "the resistance serves as a bargaining chip in our hands, and we are unable to halt it since it has bases and reservoirs of force which nourish it. It is known that the Hizbollah organization is the main factor which continues to stand and to carry out acts of resistance. If we launch strikes against their bases in Beirut or the Bekaa, then it would mean that we will silence it and possibly enter into conflict with it at an inconvenient moment for us" (Al-Hiyat, 21 December 1991). The Lebanese Minister of the Interior, Sami al-Khatib, declared that, "We are with the resistance with all our heart" (Voice of the Mountain, 18 January 1992). Just last week, Lebanese Minister of State Abdallah Alamein stated that, "resistance is our choice and we shall continue with it until the liberation of the land" (Voice of the People, 20 January 1992). Minister Alamein has also said that, "We are a part of the factions participating in the resistance" (Al-Rayeh, 10 January 1992).

By refusing to disarm Hizbollah and other terrorist organizations and by unabashedly praising their acts of bloodshed, the Lebanese Government has demonstrated itself to be unwilling to abide by its international obligations to prevent activities within its territory directed towards organizing, instigating, assisting and participating in acts of violence and terror across Israel's northern border. Such obligations are part and parcel of the Charter of the United Nations and other related international norms and declarations, particularly the Declaration on Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation Among States in Accordance with the Charter of the United Nations (General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV) of 24 October 1970).

The unwillingness of the Lebanese Government to take the necessary steps to halt the violence is no doubt due in part to the power and strength of Hizbollah's patron, the Government of Iran, and to the acquiescence of Syria. Teheran has furnished Hizbollah with training, weaponry, financial and political support, thereby enabling it to persist with its acts of terror and intimidation.

The references made in the above-mentioned letters of the representative of Lebanon to the resolutions of the Security Council pointedly fail to note the 35,000 Syrian troops and hundreds of Iranian Revolutionary Guards who are stationed on Lebanese soil. Syria's interference in Lebanese internal affairs makes a mockery of Lebanon's sovereignty and is a clear violation of its territorial integrity and political independence.

The position of Israel regarding southern Lebanon remains unchanged. Israel has no territorial claims on any part of Lebanese territory. Lebanon has failed to carry out its international obligations and to prevent the use of its territory for acts of terrorism against Israel. With a view to detecting and preventing the organization of terrorist activities and access by terrorist elements to Israel's northern border areas, Israel has found it necessary to undertake security functions and patrols in a narrow zone of the south of Lebanon. Such security arrangements are essential for Israel as long as there exists a threat that acts of violence and terror will continue to

emanate unimpeded from Lebanon. Once the threat no longer exists, there will no longer be any need for Israel to undertake such security functions.

Israel believes that the appropriate forum for the resolution of outstanding issues between the two countries lies in the bilateral negotiations which have been taking place within the framework of the peace process. This process is based upon the principle of direct face-to-face negotiations without preconditicns. Yet even as Lebanon has been participating in the negotiations, it has been sanctioning and legitimizing acts of violence and terror, acts which are wholly incompatible with Lebanon's participation in the talks.

For its part, Israel is committed to the success of the peace process and hopes that the other parties to the negotiations will adhere to the principles underlying the talks and will negotiate in good faith so as to facilitate a solution to the conflict in the region.

I should be grateful, Excellency, if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Yoram ARIDOR
Ambassador
Permanent Representative